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**Overview of United Nations Peace-keeping Operations:**

**Problems and Prospects.**

(Not an official record or press release. This summary is made available to NGO representatives for their information and free dissemination.)

On 21 October 1993, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary General for Peace-Keeping Operations briefed the NGO representatives on the principles, prospects, and problems of United Nations peace-keeping operations.

In describing the conditions under which they existed, he acknowledged that the United Nations peace keeping activities had changed rapidly in the course of UN history and reported that in the field there were 18 peace-keeping operations consisting of over 80,000 peace-keepers from 77 member nations as of October 1993.

A striking statistic was reflected in the number of peace-keepers in the field: While it took 43 years to establish the first 13 peace-keeping operations, 13 new peace-keeping operations had begun in the last 43 months. Just since December of 1992, he said, six operations had been created in Mozambique, Uganda, Rwanda, Georgia, Liberia and Haiti.

**"A Crisis of too much Credibility"**

Mr. Tharoor referred to that dramatic growth, and the radical change in the conditions under which these Operations had been established, as the "renaissance of peace-keeping". However, along with that positive change, there were questions about the ability of the UN system to respond to the increasing demand for its services. The Secretary-General had referred to the United Nations as having "a crisis of too much credibility."

**Peace-keeping Operations: The Early Days**

In presenting the evolution and purpose of peace-keeping, Mr. Tharoor pointed out that peace-keeping per se was not mentioned in the UN Charter. Rather Chapter VII contained provisions for enforcement measures, which clearly defined how operations would be established and led, and how forces would be provided by member nations. Success depended on full cooperation between the five permanent members of the Security Council.

However, in the absence of such cooperation during the cold war, the idea of "Peace-keeping" or what Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld had called "Chapter VI-and-a-half", emerged as a step between mediation and force. Thus, peace-keeping evolved as a pragmatic tool and a holding mechanism, creating enough stability on the ground for peace makers to attain a political resolution of the conflict.

**Peace-keeping operations: The evolution**

1) "Buffer Zone"

In addition to its expansion in magnitude, the nature of peace-keeping operations had changed greatly, Mr. Tharoor asserted. In the past, the United Nations Missions had acted as "a buffer" between conflicting parties. Their objective was to help end hostilities and reduce the risk of conflict recurrence. Such was the case in Cyprus, southern Lebanon and on the Golan Hights.

2) "Multi-dimensional"

In 1980, another type of peace-keeping operations had emerged, which incorporated the use of peace-keepers in the implementation of more complex agreements and settlements. Unlike traditional operations, those operations included both military and civilian components. Examples of such operations included the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia, and more recently the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in Cambodia. In those cases, peace-keeping operations were part of a package of measures, agreed upon by all parties, to end a conflict by addressing its root causes. That type of peace-keeping was distinct because of its multi-dimensional responsibilities, he said. Its tasks included election monitoring, human rights verification, institution building and the restoration of national infrastructure and services.

3)"Preventive Deployment"

Preventative Deployment was a third type of peace-keeping

operation, which occurred when the UN sent a peace-keeping force at the request of a country before the occurrence of an armed conflict. Mr. Tharoor said that the first such preventative force was sent in December 1992 to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Its primary task was to act as a early warning mechanism keeping the Security Council informed of conditions on the ground.

4) "Humanitarian Assistance"

The fourth type discussed was the deployment of a peace-keeping force for the provision of humanitarian assistance. These operations attempted to deliver humanitarian relief supplies in the midst of raging civil wars. The operations in Bosnia and Somalia represented examples of that type of peace-building. In providing humanitarian aid, the UN peace-keepers had to perform some unforseen tasks. For example, they were called upon to protect civilian workers, drive trucks carrying relief supplies, and attempt to create secure conditions for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

5) "Muscular peace-keeping"

The newest peace-keeping operation introduced was described as "muscular peace-keeping", or peace enforcement. Mr. Tharoor explained that this involved the use of military force to impose the will of the international community on recalcitrant violators of peace. Such operations had developed in Bosnia and Somalia. Mr. Tharoor emphasized the striking nature of the move the UN had made from a multidimensional operation with a strong civilian component to something as classically military as a peace enforcement operation.

**Peace-keeping operations: Challenging the Basic principles**

In examining the five types of peace-keeping operations, Mr. Tharoor identified four broad sets of principles upon which peace-keeping operations were founded: Principles, he said, which were threatened by recent events and developments.

1) UN Leadership

The first principle involved the essential "United Nations nature" of the Peace keeping operations. Until recently all Peace keeping operations were conducted by UN troops, the so called "Blue Helmets". These operations were established by the Security Council and operated under the command of the Secretary-General of

the United Nations. Mr. Tharoor noted that this fundamental principle was recently being questioned by some member states, which decline to commit their military personnel to operations under foreign command.

This basic Principle was also under attack from another direction, he said, explaining that ordinarily troops contributed to peace-keeping forces came from a wide variety of UN member states, mostly from small to medium sized neutral powers. However, recently the permanent members of the Security Council had become more willing to offer their troops, which would might put the neutral and objective nature of peace-keeping at risk.

2) Collective Financing

Peace-keeping operations had also upheld the principle of collective financing. Member states of the UN paid for peace-keeping operations, which were considered as an activity of the Organization. That was no longer the case with certain peace keeping operations, particularly the ones in Bosnia and Somalia, where countries had decided to bear the responsibility of financing their own troops in the operation due in par to the dramatic increase in the expenses of these operations.

3) Impartiality

The third broad set of principles dealt with the relationship between the UN peace-keepers and their host governments. Whereas in the past, a prerequisite to the United Nations Peace-keeping operations had been the consent and cooperation of all parties concerned in order to maintain impartiality and carry out a specific job based on a clear mandate, Mr. Tharoor noted that even this principle was now being challenged in operations such as in Bosnia and in Somalia by existing complicated situations on the ground.

He explained that the ability to remain impartial was under discussion, especially in situations between victim and an aggressor. He questioned the ability of UN peace-keepers to uphold the principle of consent and cooperation with those who blocked humanitarian convoys, and sometimes resorted to force. He said that it was a difficult task to treat the parties involved equally and fairly, if the world at large was not prepared to do so.

4) Use of force only in self defense

the fourth set of principles lay in identifying the difference

between peace-keeping and peace enforcement. The entire approach of peace-keeping was to keep peace using the moral authority of the international community rather than its military strength. It was clear that, recently, some operations had moved away from the principle of using minimal force. That had raised fundamental questions about peace-keeping, and whether peace-keeping could work in countries or situations where there was no peace to keep, he said.

He explained that, traditionally, peace-keeping was a tool that evolved to facilitate the achievement of peace when there was usually an agreement between parties in conflict. However, Peace-keepers found it difficult to function in situations without peace agreements, or with agreements that were continually being violated. International peace-keepers were unfamiliar with their role when they were caught in the midst of a raging war. These were challenging questions facing today's peace-keepers, he said.

Mr. Tharoor warned that, at a time when peace-keepers were asked to fight their way through the conflict they were attempting to resolve, Member States of the UN might be unwilling to provide troops to future peace-keeping operations.

**"Do the right thing, do the thing right".**

Mr. Tharoor stressed that United Nations peace-keeping operations had made a difference, working well enough to receive the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize. The challenge facing peace-keeping today,he said, "was not only to do the right thing, but to do the thing right". He recommended the development of clear criteria for launching peace-keeping operations and noted that the international community must also decide which situations warranted UN intervention in the form of peace-keeping operations.

"It is more expensive to wage war than to achieve peace", Mr. Tharoor declared. The cost of one day of the Gulf War could have paid for the entire UN 1991 peace-keeping budget. He recognized the importance of involvement and support by the international NGO community. He further suggested that NGOs had an important role to play in informing their national parliaments that the public around the world attached as much importance to funding for peace as they did for defense spending.

Mr. Tharoor concluded that while it might be naive to imagine that the UN one day would manage to combine the idealism and universalism of its amateur days of peace-keeping with the professionalism, the technological sophistication, and the will to win of big military powers, this remained a goal worth striving for.